THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We know ourselves and experts reaffirm—experts in architecture, in history, in city-planning, and in tourism—that unless our historic area is rescued from blight, downtown Wilmington will become a slum. We will lose for ourselves, our children, and for future generations, the aspect of a city that is rich in history and unique in appearance—a city whose heritage makes it one of the most interesting in the country.

The assets of an historic city are important economically. These assets also are important morally in the sense of protecting our past for our future, and further as a living lesson in history for young Wilmingtonians. Wilmington should be clean, not ugly with blight; Wilmington should be restored properly, not interspersed with asphalt parking lots, unplanned and unplanted.

Downtown historic Wilmington can take a number of directions at this time. It can become a slum or it can become an uninteresting, ordinary, deteriorating combination of slum and fading central business district. Or the development and planning of today can live up to the planning and development of the days that made this city unique.

We work continually to keep our channel free of silt, yet Wilmington has let its historic area become blighted. We dare not destroy an industry yet year by year Wilmington loses part of its historic properties that cannot be replaced, thus losing what is potentially one of our most rewarding industries.

Wilmington was a proud port, a flourishing seat of American culture before and after the Revolutionary War, and still proud after the Civil War. It is known for its charm and atmosphere. We must not let our city sink into mediocrity. We must build fine modern buildings in proper scale in our downtown area. We should not destroy our landmarks for this purpose, but we can replace buildings that are not outstanding with appropriate modern ones. The point is to keep downtown vital—not to let important civic, health, and cultural facilities move from our downtown area. We must have the stability downtown which such facilities bring. We cannot afford to have the heart of our city become a slum. We must match the achievement of the past with achievement in the present.

In order to carry out a plan for the historic area the following recommendations should be considered:

1. Re-evaluation of all structures within the Historic District, to determine their historical and architectural significance. The results of this study may indicate a need for redefining the boundaries of the district.

2. Survey and tabulation of existing land-use, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, social and economic characteristics, visual characteristics, and structural conditions.

3. A study of existing zoning and other controls in the District with recommendations for improvements. Passage by the North Carolina State Legislature of enabling legislation for the protection of historic zoning.

4. The development of a long-range plan for the development and preservation of the Historic District including an evaluation of the various means, both private and public, for the carrying out of the plan.

It is imperative to have the support of each member of our Society if we are to carry out the above four recommendations. The Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc. will lead the way but cannot do it alone. In the near future an opportunity will be given all other organizations with a real stake in the future of the historic area to join with us in planning for the necessary work of preservation and rehabilitation. It is a big job. Everybody interested in the future of Wilmington must help.

N. Winfield Sapp, Jr., President
MEETING

Time: Friday, February 26, 1965, 8:00 p.m.
Place: St. Andrews-Covenant Presbyterian Church.
Speaker: Dr. James W. Patton
Subject: Selected comments on Eastern North Carolina by European and American travelers, 1783-1860.

Dr. Patton, a native of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, received his A.B. from Vanderbilt University and his M.A. and PhD. from the University of North Carolina.

He has taught in the history departments of Georgia State Woman's College, The Citadel, Wittenberg College and Converse College. He has been head of the history department at North Carolina State College and is presently professor of history and director of the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina. He has served as president of the South Carolina Historical Association.

Dr. Patton's memberships include the Historical Society of North Carolina, the Society of American Archivists, Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, and Sigma Chi.


Dr. Patton makes his home in Chapel Hill.

NEW MEMBERS

Mr. M. Eugene Bullard, 603 Colonial Drive
Mrs. M. Eugene Bullard, 603 Colonial Drive
Mrs. Frederick W. Dick, 101 South 5th St.
Mr. Frederick W. Dick, Jr., 101 South 5th St.
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Mrs. Jesse C. Fisher, 118 W. Lewis St., Whiteville, N. C.
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ARCHIVES CONTRIBUTIONS

We gratefully acknowledge contributions from: Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Marshall, photographs of existing silver used by Gov. Edward B. Dudley; Claude F. Howell, old newspapers and photograph of Wilmington parade; Mrs. Peter Browne Ruffin, photograph of Bishop A. A. Watson; Mr. and Mrs. G. Rudolph Leonard, photostat copies of payroll listing of Captain Samuel Leonard, 1783-1784, and affidavits made concerning Col. Leonard and his family in 1858; Mrs. Raymond Emerson, "Search For Point Repeal" in 1964 (ms.); Mrs. Paul Jennewein, Address on Gov. Benjamin Smith made by Collier Cobb in 1911, and Directory of Fifth Avenue Methodist Church, 1919-1920; Mr. Henry J. MacMillan, "A Study of the Iredell-Macartney-McCalllough Families" by Allen Jones (ms.), a pedigree Chart of the Hon. James Iredell, ancestors and descendants, and three copies of early N. C. maps from the Map Collection at Biltmore House; Dr. C. P. E. Burgwyn, photograph of the "Hermitage"; Mrs. Bob Houston, original deeds to property on Fifth Street near Grace, 1819-1899; and Miss Louise Harlow, photograph of Captain John Van Bokkelen.
Development of Libraries in the Lower Cape Fear

By Barbara Beeland Rehder

IV. Post-Revolutionary Conditions

The British invasion of the South in 1780-81 was a desperate move. Since they had failed in New England and in the Middle Colonies, their last chance was to establish rule in the South, and they proposed to do this by conquest and ruthless destruction. Bad as conditions had been in the Colonial Period, the people had then to face sad and heavy changes for the worse. Aided by the Tories, who represented many of the worst elements of the population (Samuel Johnston declared that "not one man of any influence" was a Tory), the British spared neither men nor property, but left a trail of massacre and destruction. 

Cornwallis' surrender in 1781, followed by Major Craig's evacuation of Wilmington, brought a peace hand-in-hand with poverty, disorder, and the degradation of manners and morals. Francis W. Marshall wrote: "The land itself, the people of property, commerce, public and private credit, all are laid waste and ruined." 

But freedom brought the problems of self-government, and the attendant political unrest was partly responsible for a gradual cultural recovery, for literary activity was required for political pamphlets about reprisals against the Tories, soldiers' bonuses, paper currency, and especially state versus federal government and the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution was hotly argued everywhere in the nation. Religious questioning brought forth pamphlets almost as numerous as those political. Favorite topics were "immersion versus sprinkling, infant baptism, dangers of 'popery,' and separation of church and state."

Other signs of awakening were the revival of newspapers, including Wilmington's Chronicle and North Carolina Weekly Advertiser (1795-1796) and the Wilmington Gazette (1797-1816), and the formation of drama clubs, such as the Thalian Association. In 1785 a copyright law was enacted "to encourage genius, to promote useful discoveries and the general extension of arts and commerce." Ideals in education were no longer English, that is, that education was a function of the church and should be advocated only for "gentlemen" and the professional classes. Now, in line with Revolutionary political philosophy, ideals slowly began to reach toward mass public education. Many academies were opened, and in 1789 the University was chartered.

To be sure, these efforts were slow and feeble, backed as they were by wrenching poverty. When Washington made his Southern tour in 1791 (chiefly in an effort to win support for the Federal government), he commented at length on Wilmington in his diary on April 24, noting that "the number of Souls in it amount by the enumeration to about 1000." He observes, however, that the census is poorly conducted. There were probably nearer 1600. "It has some goodly houses pretty compactly built," he wrote. And, "The qty. of Shipping, which load here annually, amounts to about 1200 Tons." 

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Editor's Note: This is the second of three articles tracing the development of libraries in the Cape Fear area from Colonial times to the present day. The first article appeared in Vol. VII, No. 2 (February, 1964).
getting books than myself, and with these slender opportunities of instruction it is not surprising that so few became eminent in the liberal professions... 7

Wilmington at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century was plundered and poor, not growing, certainly no place of libraries. Not until after 1815 and final peace from the British were there real signs of stirring, and even in 1826 Governor Burton said of the whole state that many well-informed observers believed it more difficult to obtain a primary education than it had been fifty years before. 8 The Rip Van Winkle state was destined for a long slumber until around 1840 when a public school system would be inaugurated and general economic prosperity began to gain sway.

V. Nineteenth Century:
Circulating Libraries and Reading Rooms

No scholarly study, such as Dr. Weeks' of the Eighteenth Century, has been made of North Carolina libraries in the Nineteenth Century. We are therefore limited to a discussion of newspaper accounts of public reading rooms and circulating libraries and library clubs in the years for which the papers are available.

The fine private libraries had been victim not only of wanton plunder but the ever-present destruction of fire. Many were bought or inherited in part and then incorporated to make one large collection. One of these was the Johnston, another: the Hasell-Moseley-Lillington collection. Mr. Henry B. McCoy of Greenville, South Carolina writes that he has some treasured volumes of this collection. They came to him through his great aunt, Mrs. Thomas Hall McCoy, the daughter of Dr. Edwin A. Anderson who married Mary C. Lillington. Mr. McCoy also has the original inventory of Eleazar Allen of Lilliput Plantation in Brunswick. It lists hundreds of books and was one of the finest early libraries of the region.

There are very few newspaper items that indicate the existence of extensive personal collections. In 1833 Seth Hoard advertises under the title "Books Stolen or Taken Clandestinely," that he will pay five dollars for the return of books that had been removed from his house. In the same year Archie McCree advertised:

TO PERSONS HAVING LIBRARIES
OF STOLEN BOOKS

The subscriber will feel himself greatly obligated to such persons of the community, as may, on examination, find in their desultory collection, books having his cognomen, in, on, or about them, if they will be so obliging as to have them left at the office of the People's Press for him.

We also know that when the University of North Carolina opened in 1795 one of the first contributors to its library was James Reid of Wilmington. All in all, however it would seem that the day of the private library had passed. 9

Nevertheless, the spirit of study revived with the awakening of the cultural life of the people. Circulating libraries began to spring up as business and social ventures. They were usually housed in reading rooms and were sponsored mostly by newspaper editors, library clubs, debating societies or coffee houses.

The editors of newspapers played an important role in collecting and making available reading material for the people. One of Wilmington's outstanding citizens, William S. Hasell, bought Almand Hall's publishing establishment and became editor of The Wilmington Gazette in October, 1808. Within a month he published the following notice:

A READING ROOM

The object of this establishment is to collect in one mass all the respectable papers of every political description to be filed, all new and interesting pamphlets, and a variety of the best reviews published in this country and in England.

Terms of Subscription to the Reading Room, ten dollars a year payable half yearly in advance. Strangers are permitted to subscribe monthly at the rate of one dollar per month, payable in advance.

The READING ROOM will be opened tomorrow morning. 10

A Reading Room of the Nineteenth Century. HARPER'S WEEKLY, 1857.

This is the first record we have of a reading room in Wilmington. No doubt it was well received by the public. Hasell lost no time in placing there also an extensive collection of books, and to this collection belongs the distinction of being the first individually owned circulating library of record. On November 4, 1812, Hasell entered into a business transaction to cover his "debts and obligations." Among the items listed as security were his printing press, his house
and lot in South Third Street, and the "William S. Hasell Books composing the Circulating Library . . . providing nevertheless that when debts are paid . . . the obligation shall cease."  

Hasell had used his printing equipment before as security (April 2, 1810, The Wilmington Gazette), attesting to his continuing financial straits, but we do not know whether he lost his books on the occasion in 1812. The next notice of a reading room came from Alex Macalesce, the very next year, 1813. Macalesce kept "a regular file of papers (exchange and local) . . . in the house lately occupied by Ruggles and Zegler, for the perusal of the citizens of the town."  

With the establishing of Hasell's reading room, Wilmington kept its reputation in the world of fashion, for such a place was coming to be regarded as not for intellectual pursuit, but rather for social gathering. Either Hasell's room or that of Macalesce probably was the one referred to by the Polemic Society (a debating society) in the Raleigh Star on October 8, 1813:

There are reading rooms in Newbern, Wilmington, and Fayetteville, and they are the fashionable resort of all respectable people of those places. It would be a reproach to this Metropolis to remain longer without such an establishment. The town wants a fashionable lounging place, where intelligent citizens and strangers can meet daily, and enjoy the pleasures of reading and conversation.

Macalesce's room was still in existence in 1816, according to The Wilmington Gazette of April 6.

Wilmington coffee houses sometimes kept reading rooms to which their customers and supposedly the general public could subscribe. This fact provides a pleasant glimpse into the life of the time, for these rooms were probably not the fashionable lounging places the Polemic Society envied, but instead comfortable places where the business men of the town stopped for a leisurely cup of coffee while bringing themselves up to date on happenings across the state and in the great cities of the nation. Such a coffee house was Old '76, that same Assembly Hall in which the Grand Ball for President Washington was held. It had come in time to house this business and others. Old '76 advertised on May 19, 1818, a request that subscribers come by and pay their fees.

We should have a much clearer picture of the reading habits of the times if we had a complete file of public prints. Our next known reference is from Thomas Loring, who in December 1833 became editor of the People's Press and Wilmington Advertiser. He announced in May of that year that he would establish a reading room. It was to be on a nonprofit basis and required all members to pay a yearly fee of only one dollar, for which they could use the papers any time before nine o'clock in the evening. In the same year Loring inserted a facetious notice of a newly formed organization called "The Anti-Take-The-Papers-Out-of-the-Reading-Room Society." In December he announced a file of one hundred fifty papers from twenty states. Articles still appeared in 1834 concerning the improvements in this reading room.

During the same time, William C. Jackson was advertising a circulating library in connection with his book store. He lent his "latest books at 6½ cents per week." He continued to advertise as late as 1856.

VI. The Debating Societies

On January 23, 1833, Thomas Loring and his co-editor, P. W. Fanning urged the formation of a library and debating society, saying it would "open an extensive field to the inquiring mind; lead to reading and reflection, by which the mind is strengthened and the judgment improved." On February 13, 1833, the People's Press carried an announcement of a regular meeting of the Wilmington Debating and Literary Society. In March it was announced they would meet on Tuesdays at Mr. Christian's, in April on Mondays at Byrn's store.

It would be hard to overestimate the influence of the debating society in the lives of the cultivated men of the time. Members usually read, spoke, and composed alternately, and they took turns debating on the great moral, religious, and political issues of the day. These activities required libraries of solid content and were a profound educational influence for over a hundred years.

It is estimated that the Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies of University fame had, together, the best collection of books in the state. The records of those societies are well kept and give us an idea of what went on.
young men of any age might argue: Is female modesty natural or affected? and, Is love without hope or malice without re-
venge most injurious?

VII. The Wilmington Library Association

In 1849 the Wilmington Mercantile Library Association
was formed. This was the first organization of its kind since
that venerable "society of gentlemen" relinquished the Cape
Fears Library. We know little of it, but are reminded by Guion
Griffis Johnson that the library clubs were designed chiefly
for the entertainment of the members, not for the entire
town. Members paid an annual fee, bought some books and
 circulated them among themselves. "As the number of books
increased, the society usually sought incorporation by the
General Assembly. If the society prospered over the years
the members occasionally established a reading room equipped
with newspapers, maps, and globe."  

The Wilmington Mercantile Library Association did pros-
per in the next few years, and it might have followed the
course described by Johnson, but apparently the time was ripe
for a truly public effort. Some notable men of the town,
among whom were George Davis, Donald MacRae, Louis
and Armand deRosset, and Alexander Sprunt, organized late in
1855 the Wilmington Library Association. The Wilmington
Mercantile Library Association then resolved to transfer its
holdings to the new society. The new society was looked upon
with great hope for developing into a permanent public in-
sitution, and it was with great pride that the Wilmington
Journal for January 14, 1856 announced:

The Wilmington Library Association has obtained a
large and ample hall for a library and Reading Room,
situated on Water Street, in the rear of Rankin and
Martin's Office.

All donations of Books, Maps, Charts, Engravings,
Paintings or Plaster Casts of eminent persons must be
directed to Mr. J. J. Norcom, Librarian.

Editors of Magazines and papers throughout the coun-
try are asked to send copies of their publications.

The Wilmington Library Association was the town's major
literary center throughout the Nineteenth Century. By 1858
it had prospered and grown so that it required new rooms and
was moved from Water Street to the present City Hall which
had just been completed. As the dark days of civil war drew
on, we find it advertising in the Daily Journal (January 20,
1861): "The members of the Wilmington Library Associa-
tion are hereby notified that the Library and Reading Room
will be open every day from the hours of Ten to Twelve, and
from Six to Ten, P.M., after the 3rd inst."  

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Anti-Bellum Wilmington, North Carolina, A thesis written for Duke
University in 1946. There is a carbon copy in the Wilmington Public
Library.

FOOTNOTES

4 Weeks, op. cit., p. 220.
6 Henderson, Archibald, Washington's Southern Tour, pp. 101-144.
7 Weeks, op. cit., p. 219.
8 Letter, op. cit., p. 304.
9 Wetmore, op. cit., p. 40.
10 The Wilmington Gazette, October 11, 1868. Thanks to Mrs. S. C.
Kellam.
11 Deed Book O, p. 504, New Hanover County. Thanks to Mrs. S. C.
Kellam.
12 Wetmore, op. cit., pp. 40-46, for this and following paragraphs.
13 Battle, Kemp, History of the University of North Carolina, pp. 72-87
14 Weeks, op. cit., p. 164.
15 Winston Broadfoot's "Historical Sketch of the Wilmington Public
Library" in the dedication program, July 16, 1916.
16 Wetmore, op. cit., pp. 41-46.
17 Thanks to Mrs. S. C. Kellam.

AN APPEAL TO OUR MEMBERS

The Lower Cape Fear Society, Inc. can achieve its goal only with the aid and co-
operation of the Society's members.

There is no doubt that many valuable records, letters, diaries, and documents of an
historical, social, and political nature are gathering dust in attics and other obscure
storage places. Too many will be destroyed by persons who do not realize their value.

Your Society is the logical repository for such records. Here they would be examined,
catalogued, preserved, and made available to future generations.

If any member knows of the existence of any material which the Society might be
able to acquire, please contact Mrs. Ida B. Kellam, RO 2-2178, or any officer or director
of the Society.
Smith-Anderson House

By Ida B. Kellam

On the southeast corner of Front and Orange Streets stands one of the oldest houses in Wilmington. The property was in the possession of two families, Smith and Anderson, for about 150 years. James Wimbly bought this part of the Watson Grant, set up the lots from Orange Street to near Queen Street, and began numbering his lots, with the water lot west of the Smith-Anderson house designated as number one. A few years later Market Street was established as the center street of the town and Lot No. 1 became No. 61, and the Smith-Anderson lot became No. 62.

Before the change in the numbering of lots, James Wimbly sold lots No. 1 and No. 5, 2 to Edward Mitchell, a planter, in 1738. (AB-233). In June 1744 Grace Mitchell, executrix of Edward Mitchell, deceased, sold John Smith the lot, 66 x 330 and designated as Lot No. 2, of the south side of Orange Street, between Front and Second, for 250 pounds. Just six years earlier Mitchell had paid only 24 pounds for lots one and two. (C-20). The increase in value over such a short period suggests that a house had already been erected here.

On 8 May, 1772, John Smith as a resident of Bladen County, deeded to his daughter Elizabeth Bailey, and her husband James Bailey, the house and lot at the southeast corner of Front and Orange Streets, the lot running 66 feet on Orange Street and 33 feet on Front Street. He specified in this deed that if his daughter, Elizabeth, should die without heirs the property would revert back to him, said John Smith. But he did agree that the property should "continue to James Bailey . . . until all expenses with interest be fully paid which James Bailey shall expend in furnishing and improving the House now Standing." (L-1, p. 332). Examination of the house shows a definite line in the wall where the building was enlarged and the bricks set in to make a continuous wall. James Bailey may have enlarged the house as a part of his improvement, or it may have been done later, but there does not seem to be a noticeable difference in the materials used in the original part and the addition of the building.

This lot, 33 x 66, seems quite small for a house as large as this, but other larger houses in Wilmington are on the same size lot. The property was given by James and Elizabeth Smith Bailey to their daughter Sarah. On 15 Dec. 1776, James Samuel Purdie and wife Sarah, of Bladen County sold this property to Edward Croft of Charleston, S. C. The deed recites, "part of Lot No. 62, lying on the South side of Orange Street, 33 feet along Front Street and 66 feet East on Orange Street," which was conveyed 8 May 1772 by John Smith to James and Elizabeth Bailey, father and mother of Sarah Purdie, and from them descended to James S. and Sarah Purdie. (L-2, p. 451). The property had been owned by John Smith, his daughter Elizabeth Bailey and his granddaughter Sarah Purdie from 1744 until 1796. Edward Croft sold it to Butler Ashford in 1799. In 1829 Alexander Anderson began buying the several small lots at this location and when he dated his will in 1844 he owned the entire Northwest corner or one-fourth of the entire block at the corner of Orange and Front Streets. His daughter, Margaret Y. Davis, wife of George W. Davis who was the son of General Thomas Davis, was given the western half of the property and at that time they were living in this house. His son James Anderson was to have the remaining part between the property of daughter Margaret and Thomas W. Brown. (WB AB-417). At this time James Anderson was living in the house adjoining the Brown property, and when he applied for insurance on his residence in 1849 he stated that E. A. Cushing was living in the Brick House at the corner of Orange and Front. Dr. Edwin A. Anderson must have taken up residence here at the time of the Civil War. Smaw's Wilmington Directory, 1867, shows him residing here with an office on Market Street. The City Block Map of 1881 indicates that he was residing here and his office was near the house and facing

EDITORS NOTE: One of the most interesting old houses in Wilmington and one which has been known traditionally as the oldest house in the town is the Smith-Anderson house. There has been much speculation as to its history. Mrs. Ida B. Kellam's research determines the ownership of the property since before the house was constructed between 1733 and 1744. It is possible that General Alexander Lillington may have stayed in the house but he never owned it. Possibly the reason it was called GENERAL LIL-LINGTON'S HOUSE, is on the Orr etching, it became Mary Lillington married Dr. Edwin A. Anderson in 1842 and it was thus associated in some people's minds with the Lillington family. It is quite likely that the part of the house on the corner, built flush with sidewalk, in many early 19th Century houses were, it Wilmington's oldest house.

The Smith-Anderson house, from an original etching by Louis Orr (Plate XXI, Album V).
Orange Street. It has since been moved and faces Front Street. In 1871 Margaret Y. Davis deeded to Mary C. Anderson (wife of Dr. Edwin A.) her part of this estate, and in 1878 James Anderson deeded her his part of the estate. With this, Dr. Edwin A. and Mary C. Anderson became owners of this one-fourth of the Block willed by Alexander Anderson to son James and daughter Margaret Y. Davis. Margaret Y. Davis seems to have retained an undivided interest in the James Anderson home. (See DB YYY, p. 240). Dr. Anderson died 1894 and his wife, Mary, died 1897, but the property remained in the family until about 1910, when it was purchased by Mr. E. P. H. Strunck. Mr. Strunck owned it until 1945 and it became the property of his daughter, Mrs. G. C. Avant.

The present owner is Thomas H. Wright, Jr.

All references are to record books in the New Hanover County Registry of Deeds.

FORM OF BEQUEST

The great need of the Association, in order to render broader and more effective service, is to have funds available for historical research, publications, and restoration of historic sites. For those purposes, it is hoped that interested persons will bequeath to the Association whatever sum or sums of money may be available. The following form is suggested:

To the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc., a nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of the State of North Carolina, I give and bequeath the sum of $__________________________

This bequest is unrestricted, and the Board of Directors or other governing body may use and expend the same for the benefit of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc., in any manner it deems appropriate.

LOWER CAPE FEAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA